

PEPReC

*Partnered Evidence-based Policy Resource Center
A VA QUERI Center*

Randomized Program Evaluation: Caring Letters Suicide Prevention Campaign

PEPReC Project Lead: Melissa Garrido, PhD

Operations Partner: VA Suicide Prevention Program, Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (OMHSP)

Research Partners: Mark Reger, PhD, VA Puget Sound; Sara Landes, VA Little Rock

The suicide prevention program in OMHSP is providing caring letters to veterans calling the Veterans Crisis Line. Caring letters are a series of 8 letters sent over one year that include decision support, help with coping skills, and assistance navigating the healthcare system. OMHSP plans to evaluate whether letters signed by a peer rather than a provider are more likely to improve mental health outcomes for transitioning service members. PEPReC is leading the design and analysis of the randomized evaluation of these caring letter modalities. Using a randomized controlled trial (RCT) design, all identifiable callers that are VHA enrollees will be randomly assigned to one of 2 conditions (peer signatory, provider signatory). This work is being done in partnership with experts in suicide prevention at OMHSP, Little Rock and Puget Sound (PI: Mark Reger, PhD). Goals of this project are to evaluate the effects of caring letters on clinical outcomes and VA health care utilization rates, to evaluate the effects of different versions of caring letters on clinical outcomes, and to conduct a budget impact analysis of the costs of implementing the caring letters program.

Future activities:

We will continue to participate in design and analysis activities related to the caring letters evaluation.